DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 443 839 TM 031 484

AUTHOR Janesick, Valerie J.
TITLE Intuition and Creativity: A Pas de Deux for Qualitative Researchers.
PUB DATE 2000-04-24
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Creativity; *Intuition; *Qualitative Research; *Researchers

ABSTRACT

The importance of intuition and creativity in qualitative research is discussed. By discussing lessons learned from well-known creative individuals, it is possible to find ways to open a conversation on creativity. Since the researcher is the research instrument in qualitative research projects, the definition of the role of the researcher is critically important. In addition to all that is already known about the researcher's role, it is necessary to go a step further. The extra step is to reflect on, describe, and explain the intuitive moments and creative moments in any given qualitative research project. (Contains 23 references.) (Author/SLD)

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ED 443 839

INTUITION AND CREATIVITY: A PAS DE DEUX FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS

By

Valerie J. Janesick, Ph.D.
Roosevelt University
Department of Educational Leadership
430 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60605
312-341-2190
312-341-4326 (fax)

The Second Annual Egon G. Guba
Distinguished Lecture, American Educational Research Association
New Orleans, LA.
April 24, 2000
Session # 7.01

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V. J. Janesick

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Introductory Remarks

I am honored to be invited to deliver this, the 2nd annual Egon G. Guba Distinguished Lecture, here in New Orleans. The contribution to the field of Qualitative Research by Egon Guba is remarkable on many levels. Egon began teaching us many ways to look at the world, especially the world of research. From his many writings especially his books, we began a dialogue in our field that lasts to this day. I am happy to be part of this conversation with this paper, "Intuition and Creativity: A pas de deux for Qualitative Researchers."

ABSTRACT

The author writes about the importance of intuition and creativity in the qualitative research project. By discussing lessons learned from well-known creative individuals, we find ways to open a conversation on creativity. Since the researcher is the research instrument in qualitative research projects, the definition of the role of the researcher is critically important. In addition to all we know already about the researcher's role, the author argues for going a step further. The extra step is to reflect upon, describe and explain the intuitive moments and creative moments in any given qualitative research project.

Intuition and Creativity: A Pas de Deux for Qualitative Researchers

By
Valerie J. Janesick
Roosevelt University

> The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all-true art and science.
>
> Albert Einstein

> *"The lunatic, the lover and the poet, Are of imagination all compact.*
> *...The poet's eyes in a fine frenzy rolling*
> *Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;*
> *And, as imagination bodies forth the forms of things*
> *unknown, the poet's pen turns them into shapes and gives airy nothing a*
> *Local habitation and a name.*
>
> William Shakespeare
> A Midsummer Night's Dream
> V,i,7

Introduction

In this paper, I would like to discuss the nature of Intuition and Creativity as a key component in qualitative research projects. By discussing intuition and creativity, I hope to initiate a conversation, which may illuminate how we view the role of the qualitative researcher and how we may better explain that role. I will once again use the metaphor of dance, (2000) and in this case I see intuition and creativity as a pas de deux. In dance, the pas de deux is designed for two dancers but with the idea that they move as one. They are totally connected to the final product, whatever the meaningful movement is to be and whatever way it is to be articulated. For the purposes of this paper, I would like to define intuition as immediate apprehension or cognition. Intuition is a way of knowing about the world through insight and exercising one's imagination. Likewise for this paper, I am defining creativity in its generic sense, that is having the sense of or quality of being created rather than imitated. In other words, I am trying to shift

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the conversation about qualitative research methodology and design from the MacDonaldization or Disneyfication of method and design to an understanding of the intuitive and the creative.

Doctoral students often discuss with me the ways in which intuition has manifested itself in their research projects. They often want to go further in exploring how they came to probe in an interview or how they decided to go back to the social setting on a given day or how the revisit their interview transcripts. It is this phenomenon, the act of using intuition and creativity in the research act, which has made me think about how much we are missing if we don't explore the importance of both intuition and creativity. Historically, over the past forty to fifty years, we have been writing and thinking a great deal about design of qualitative research projects and about technique. While design and technique are critical, I want to shift this conversation to go beyond technique. In this paper I would like to refer to writers from art, science, literature and dance to make my key points.

I begin with the words of the Chinese master painter and teacher Lu Ch'ai from the 1791 classic on painting, the Tao of Painting:

> Some set great value on method, while others pride themselves on dispensing with method. To be without method is deplorable, but to depend on method entirely is worse. You must first learn to observe the rules faithfully; afterwards modify them according to your intelligence and capacity. The end of all method is to have no method.

Though this teacher codified these remarks and the entire text in the 18th century it is actually a formal text put together from the previous eleven centuries. The advice is relevant here to the work of the qualitative researcher. Have we not found as we teach our classes that learners begin with an almost slavish adherence to rules? Have we not seen in the many methods texts advice on how to do observations, interviews, journal writing, archival retrieval of evidence and the like? This advice, almost prescriptive in nature to assist beginners, needs to be extended to include rules

of thumb or information on technique, much like choreographers and stage directors do. In the case of dance for example, mastering the rules of technique is critical, but only a beginning. The dancer continues to practice daily those techniques, which eventually allow the dancer to modify and interrupt movement and technique. The result is a creative act. The creative act uses the dancer's intuition as much as physical technique, endurance and stamina.

Likewise, the qualitative researcher may benefit from exercising creativity by being awake to the intuitive inclinations ever present in fieldwork. In thinking about and investigating what has been written about intuition and creativity, I turn now to analyzing some current research as well as turning back in reviewing the work which touches upon intuition and creativity. In addition, the role of the qualitative researcher is of critical importance since the researcher is the research instrument. If we can help to describe how we use our intuition and creativity in our research projects, all of us benefit. Like the artist who uses paint and brushes, or the dancer who uses movement, the qualitative researcher uses many techniques as tools to ultimately tell a story. For us words and the power of the narrative are essential. By understanding how we use intuition and creativity, we may widen our vocabulary of understanding the role of the qualitative researcher.

Intuition and Creativity

In this section of the paper, I want to address some of the key points in Mihaly Csikszent-Mihaly's (1996) work as reported in his major text, Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention. The author was awarded a grant from the Spencer Foundation to study creativity as a life long process. In beginning the project, Csikszentmihaly found no systematic studies of living creative individuals. Aside from biographies and autobiographies, he ventured to

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design a four year interview/observation study of ninety-one creative individuals in the fields of literature, art, physics, biology, and I'm sorry to say, no one from dance. Nonetheless the researcher found three ways to look at creativity:

1) The first way to approach creativity is the way we normally do in ordinary conversation. Here we refer to people who express unusual thoughts, who are interesting and stimulating and who are bright. Someone with a quick mind and who are often called brilliant.

2) A second view is used to refer to people who experience the world in novel and original ways. The make important discoveries but only they know of the discoveries. This can be called personal creativity.

3) The third view of creativity refers to individuals who have changed our culture in some critical way. For example Michelangelo, Leonardo DaVinci, Einstein, Edison, Martha Graham, Picasso, Dickens and Sylvia Plath would fall into their category for example. Viewing creativity in this way the individual must publicize in some form the idea which makes a shift or change in culture. In our own field of qualitative research Egon Guba, who we honor tonight, certainly has shifted our culture in a profound way. He and others with him began the ongoing dialogue on qualitative research methods as necessary for extending educational and other research projects.

Learning from Masters of Creativity: Shaping a Creative Life Work

Compared to what we
ought to be, we are
only half awake.

William James

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Creative Imagination is the
Only free action of that
Idealizing activity which
Is involved in all knowledge
Whatever.

John Dewey

When we think about intuition and creativity the past one hundred years or so have led us to studies on learning, the brain, and the parts of the brain. In this paper, while all are critical, parts of a whole, I am concentrating only on what can be learned about creativity and intuition, from recognized and known creative individuals. The reasons for focusing on creativity are much the same reasons Csikszentmihaly (1996) chose to do so. Creativity is indeed a central source for learning and living. Many writers have pointed out that what makes human beings different from apes, for example, is our ability to be creative. Creativity adds texture, complexity and richness to our understanding of every day life in every day settings. For example, here are the words of the astronomer, Vera Rubin. She speaks about her unplanned discovery that stars belonging to a galaxy do not all rotate in the same direction.

> …It takes a lot of courage to be a research scientist. It really does. I mean, you invest an enormous amount of yourself, your life, your time, and nothing may come of it. You could spend five years working on a problem and it could be wrong before you are done. Or someone might make a discovery just as you are finishing that could make it all wrong. That's a real possibility. I guess I have been lucky. Initially, I went into this career feeling very much that my role as an astronomer, as an observer, was just to gather very good data…and in most cases it turned out to be more than that…but discoveries are always nice. I just discovered something this spring that is enchanting. I remember how fun it was.
>
> V. Rubin

Rubin's description here of course is part of many years of hard work and discloses the revelation like quality of creativity. She goes on to say:

> Thirty years ago, it was totally different. I would have questioned whether I would ever really be an astronomer. I had enormous doubts early in my career. It was nothing but one large doubt whether this would really work. It wasn't that I was able to persevere. I was unable to stop! I just couldn't give it up. It was too important...But I never was sure, really sure that it was going to work.
>
> V. Rubin

Likewise, the poet Mark Strand develops some ideas on where his intuitive work and creativity derive:

> ...One of the amazing things about what I do is, you don't know when you're going to be hit by an idea. You don't know where it comes from, I think it has to do with language...it's a great mystery to me, but then so many things are... I don't even know whether my writing is a way of figuring it (life) out. I think that its inevitable that, you learn more about yourself the more you write, but that's not the purpose of writing. I don't write to find out more about myself. I write because it amuses me... I am always working even if its unconsciously, even though I am carrying on conversations with people and doing things, somewhere in the back of my head I am writing, mulling over.
>
> M. Strand

Both Rubin and Strand elucidate the feeling of being unable to stop their work and the overall satisfaction from meaningful work. Ellen Lanyon, the painter, explains another component of creativity.

> For a lot of my early work, I was labeled a sophisticated primitive because I was doing Chicago street scenes, but they were influenced by Sienese egg tempera painters of the fourteenth century. And consequently there was a certain kind of naïve approach to perspective, which was also premeditated. I was not naïve. I was using a certain style. And in the late forties, that was quite appropriate. It was part of what was going on also in American imagery and especially reginal imagery. Then because I moved through a period of time where I wanted to work on a larger scale, I worked with oil paint. And then in the very early sixties, by chance, I started to work from photographs. I worked from old family photographs. I worked from newspapers, sports photographs. I worked from old rotogravures that I found in Italy. And it was all figure

> painting. It was all nostalgia. You know, at that time to work from photographs was a taboo. I was actually working through the photograph and translating a sort of space or a pattern on the canvas that in its way resembled and was a view, a photographic view, of a particular situation that had occurred. It froze time. It stabilized a situation. Some of those photographs of the family were of deceased people. And a secondary reason was to take my own personal history, document it, establish it in time, so to speak, and therefore it was out and finished. I could se it aside, and I could go on. And that was a very important thing for me. And so therefore the work changed because imagery changed and moved.
>
> Next I went into the use of acrylics, which by that time were pretty well improved, and one could work with them. And I spent about five years training myself in the use of acrylics. So that now most people don't even know they're not oil paintings. In the process of doing that I resolved that I would also change the content. So I made another sort of cerebral decision, and I chose to work with the object, not the still life, but the object. And I went through a whole series of things…The objects began to take on their own life… That started in about 1968, and the work is still involved in that general area…I mean, it all sort of proliferated and moved along.
>
> E. Lanyon

Thus, Lanyon shows us another part of the face of creativity, how it is changeable, developmental, and autobiographical. Another facet of creativity can be seen in these comments of the television producer Robert Trachinger about his work as fulfilling.

> I really want to enjoy life now. I've kicked back. I've always been a very hard worker, A-type personality. I used to have high blood pressure problems and take pills. Now I don't have to take pills anymore. I do some yoga, I do some tai chi. Teaching remains my great love because I get so much love and response from students, so much caring. That's important to me because the lonely ghetto kid is still very much a part of me. I have enough money now to live comfortably without working or without teaching for that matter. I enjoy going to Europe and teaching young people in Europe, and consulting with the schools that I'm beginning to set up, departments of television and filmmaking. And I caution them about buying into our form of television because it's kind of cultural imperialism. Most of what they watch on television in Europe is American television, and it erodes their cultures. So we talk about these values. How do you develop responsible filmmakers and television makers who are not out simply to titillate audiences and make bucks?

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> I'm going to school. I attend great books courses, and I'm fascinated by reading. If you came upstairs, I have easily fifteen hundred to two thousand books, many which I've not read, but I hope as I get older I'll read, and I'll have more and more time to read. And I counsel young people. I am not a sage by any means, but I've lived sixty-seven years, and there are some things I do sense and do know. Caring is a good feeling, and we've lost our appetite for it.
>
> R. Trachinger

These ideas on creativity resonate and are congruent with John Dewey's ideas on their topic. He reminds us of the total seizure of the creative moment.

> I have previously noted that artist and perceiver alike begin with what may be called a total seizure, an inclusive qualitative whole not yet articulated, not distinguished into members.... Moreover, not only does the "mood" come first, but it persists as the substratum after distinctions emerge; in fact they emerge as *its* distinctions.
>
> John Dewey

In fact, Dewey uses the term, "intuition" as a pervasive sense of experience. As Alexander, (1987) points out, Dewey writes of the completeness of the art of creativity and the use of creativity. Dewey (1958) likewise reminds us of art in any form as dynamic, wholistic, and intuitive. This is precisely what the Czikszentmihaly (1996) study shows us in various degrees of complexity. In the study of creativity Czikszentmihaly (1996) found numerous themes.

Thematic Meanings in the Creativity Study

What Csikszentmihaly (1996) found as major themes are those qualitative researchers often discuss, describe and explain. Creative people, he points out, are **constantly surprised** and constantly find new ways of looking at a given problem. He labels their ability "problem finding." I would go a step further and say that good qualitative researchers are indeed problem finders, but

they are also problem posers. In any given study, new way of looking at a given setting can also be a way of posing and constructing something new.

He goes on to say, he found that creative individuals exhibit **curiosity and interest** in their world not limited to their content expertise. Of course they were all content experts in various fields such as literature, physics, biology or music, and were curious about moving forward in their fields. In addition they also were curious about the world around them and how that related to their world, their field of expertise and their lives.

Threads of continuity from childhood to later life was yet another valuable finding from the study. Some followed convoluted and unpredictable routes to where they stood. Yet most like Linus Pauling, for example, always knew they would be the artist or scientist in the making. Pauling worked in his father's drugstore as a child, which sparked his interest in chemistry. Likewise, Frank Offner, the famed electrical engineer and inventor recalls:

> I know that I always wanted to play and make things like mechanical sets…When I was six or seven years old, we were in New York and I remember at the Museum of Natural History, there was a seismograph which had a stylus working across the smoked drum, and there were a couple of heavy weights, and I asked my father how it worked and he said, "I don't know." And that was the first time…you know, like all kinds do, I thought my father knew everything…So I was interested in how that worked, and I figured it out.
>
> Frank Offner

Offner went on to make many discoveries. He developed transistorized measuring devices, the differential amplifier, and medical instrumentation. He figured out a way to make the measurements of the electrocardiogram, electroencephalogram, and the electromyogram. Some of his greatest inventions involved a stylus moving across a drum. So there was a very long thread of continuity here. Another example of continuity can be found in C. Vann Woodward's interest in the history of the South.

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> That interest was born out of a personal experience of growing up there and feeling strongly about it, one way or another. I have always told my students, "if you are not really interested in this subject and do not feel strongly about it, don't go into it." And of course much of my writing was concerned with those controversies and struggles that were going on at the time and what their background and origins and their history were…
>
> The place I grew up was important. The environment and the time following the Civil War and Reconstruction…It is the defeated who really think about a war, not the victors.
>
> C. Vann Woodward

For Woodward, again, the interest in his work began early in childhood. Likewise, and with their final example of continuity. Ellen Lanyon recalled her first feeling of destiny and creativity related to her grandfather's death. Her maternal grandfather came to the United States from Yorkshire, England for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. She always felt she would follow in her grandfather's footsteps.

> …And when I was about twelve years old, my grandfather died. My father and mother put together his equipment that was left plus new tubes of paint, etcetera, and it was presented to me on my twelfth birthday…and so I started painting…I can absolutely remember the room, the place, you know, everything. I don't know what happened to the painting…but that's the kind of beginning that sets a pattern for a person.
>
> Ellen Lanyon

What these creative individuals show us can help us as qualitative researchers to dig deeply into our role and go further in explaining the beginning of our interest in the work we do. This can help illuminate more clearly the role of the researcher in qualitative research projects.

The Pas de Deux of Intuition and Creativity: Lessons for Today

At this point you the reader may be wondering about the lessons we might learn from this long term study on intuition and creativity. Like the two dancers in a pas de deux, intuition and creativity seem almost as one. They are totally connected to the final show, so to speak. They embolden our discoveries and questions whether in art, music, literature, the sciences or everyday life. Qualitative researchers spend a great deal of time and energy inquiring into social settings and the meaning of the actors lives in those settings. If we take the time to carve out some space to understand the place of intuition and creativity in our work, like the dancers of the pas de deux, we present a more complete, wholistic, and authentic study of our own role as storyteller and artist/scientist. In closing, the words of Pablo Neruda seem relevant from his poem The Word.

From The Word by Pablo Neruda

... Later on, meaning fills the word...
Affirmation, clarity, strength,
Negation, destruction, death:
The name took on all the powers
And combined existence with essence
In its electric beauty.

Human word, syllable, flank
Of long light and hard silver,
It is here that silence was formed by
The whole of the human word
And not to speak is to die among beings;
Language extends out to the hair,
The mouth speaks without moving the lips:
Suddenly the eyes are words.

I take the word and move
Through it, as if it were
Only a human form,
Its lines delight me and I sail

In each resonance of language:
I utter and I am
And across the boundary of words,
Without speaking, I approach silence.

I drink to the word, raising
A word or crystalline cup,
In it I drink
The wine of language
Or unfathomable water.

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Valerie J. Janesick, is Professor and Doctoral Program Director, Department of Educational Leadership and Organizational Change at Roosevelt University. She teaches courses in Qualitative Research Methods, Curriculum Inquiry, Ethics and Leadership and Program Evaluation. She has recently contributed a chapter to the Second Edition Handbook of Qualitative Research., entitled, "The Choreography of Qualitative research Design: Minuets, Improvisations, and Chrystallization."